

CHINA / DIPLOMACY

Iraq War 20 years on: hegemony that threatening world peace should be contained; US decision-makers 'should be held accountable'

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Demonstrators march in Washington, D.C. on March 18, 2023 during an anti-war protest organized by the Answer Coalition and dozens of other groups, in remembrance of the 20th anniversary of the US military invasion of Iraq and to call for peace negotiations in Ukraine, among other demands for international peace. Photo: AFP

The Iraq War, which started on March 20 of 2003 when the US and its allies launched an invasion against a sovereign country in the Middle East based on fake intelligence about "weapons of mass destruction," has brought destructive and irreversible disasters to the region, and caused much collateral damage to the world.

In recent days, many US and Western mainstream media outlets have published articles looking back on the war, but they failed to point out the fundamental reason why such a tragedy could happen and also failed to criticize the US hegemony that keeps imposing threats to world peace 20 years after the Iraq War, said experts.

The so-called democracy or "checks and balance" of the US political system cannot prevent Washington from making reckless decisions based on fraud, lies or manipulated public opinion, and this has brought devastating disasters to countries like Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan, while the military industrial complex and some senior US politicians including some former presidents, are the ones that benefited from the wars, analysts said.

In past decades, the West-launched invasions, interventions and proxy wars have led to chaos, deaths and poverty, which together formed a fertile "breeding ground" for terrorism, analysts said. This also proves that the Washington's "Greater Middle East Initiative" to Westernize the region has also completely failed.

What is even more disturbing to the international community is that although the wars launched by the US have caused frequent and endless chaos in the Middle East and other regions worldwide, and seriously damaged the right to survival and development of the local people, it seems the US leaders have never worried they would be prosecuted for the wars they launched overseas. In fact, the US has never accepted the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction over its nationals.

These US decision-makers behind those wars should be held accountable for the actual humanitarian disasters and war crimes they caused in Iraq, and they should pay or compensate for the huge losses that they caused during the war and occupation in Iraq, according to the Algerian media Echorouk El Yawmi and the Iraqi newspaper Azzaman.



Former US secretary of state Colin Powell holds up a vial of what was later found to be washing powder as evidence of "weapons of mass destruction" being developed in Iraq on February 5, 2003. Photo: VCG

US war crime

Some US media and politicians have tried to argue that the US "liberated Iraqi people from the evil dictatorship" and brought positive changes to Iraq despite some disgraceful records like the Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse and killing civilians during US' military operations. But from the perspective of Iraqi people, we heard completely different stories.

Waleed Khaled Mfatan, an Iraqi safety engineer who witnessed the changes in the past two decades of his country and now works on a school construction project, told the Global Times that the US forces in his country are "tyrants," and "whoever tyrannizes the country cannot establish peace."

Haider Qasim Al-Tamimi, head of the Institute of Historical Research at the Bayt Al-Hikma, a think tank in Iraq, told the Global Times that the war was well planned and based on lies and fake evidence, and served the interests of US politics and strategy, but eventually, it brought disaster to Iraqi people. "More than 200,000 civilians were killed, tens of millions of people were displaced, and the economic losses are uncountable."

The damage caused by the war is still ongoing, and the US not only destroyed a country that used to be prosperous and beautiful, but also broke the power balance of the Middle East. This deeply changed the geopolitical landscape of

the region, and caused endless chaos and uncertainties, said Al-Tamimi.

The war shattered Iraq's politics, economy and society, and the chaos provided a breeding ground for terrorism, so the threat of terrorism has risen rapidly after the war. Terrorist groups like ISIS rose one by one, which proves that the so-called Global War on Terror launched by the US, which is also an excuse for US interventions in the region, has also failed, experts said.

The US has not learnt from the lessons of history. The Ukraine crisis is an example. NATO's unbridled expansion triggered strong reaction from Russia and caused the outbreak of the military conflict, and this has once again shown that US international policies are seriously problematic, said the Iraqi expert.

Chinese analysts said Iraq is far from the only victim of US hegemony. Many countries across the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia share the same pain. These countries have been damaged to different extents, and the security and peace of their regions have not been improved, instead they worsened after US interventions.



A supporter of Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr carries the Iraqi flag as he walks down a road blocked by burning tires during a demonstration in Iraq's southern city of Basra on August 29, 2022. Dozens of angry supporters of the powerful cleric stormed the Republican Palace, a ceremonial building in the fortified Green Zone, a security source said, shortly after Sadr said he was quitting politics. Photo: AFP

To contain hegemony

The Iraq War was the start of the decline of the US' soft power since the end of the Cold War, Zhu Weilie, director of the Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times on Sunday.

"Global trust in the US plummeted after the Iraq War," Zhu said. The US failed to provide any convincing evidence to support its pretexts for launching the war, and the pretext itself has proven to be a lie. After the war, the US failed to provide better governance and development for the region, but made everything worse, Zhu noted.

When more members of the international community realized that the US is untrustworthy and unreliable, and perceive the danger of US hegemony, they will consider how to deal with the hegemony and better protect each other from US interventions, long-arm jurisdiction and sanctions, said experts.

The latest diplomatic victory of resuming diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran with China's mediation and support is a positive signal showing that major powers in the Middle East have realized the importance of independent decision-making, and to jointly find the way for peaceful coexistence and cooperation in the future, in other words, to jump out the trap of a "clash of civilizations" set by the US, analysts noted.

More importantly, the US' hard power is declining, as it has no strength to launch another invasion against a country of Iraq's size, and China with rising influence and strength has brought more energy to the side of justice in the international arena, making more and more developing nations have the confidence to seek their own ways for development and security, experts said.

Li Haidong, a professor at the Institute of International Relations at the China Foreign Affairs University, told the Global Times that "to contain US hegemony, it's crucial that all nations in the world should respect the authority of the UN, making Washington unable to legitimize its unilateral military actions against other countries. But this is not enough, and we have a lot more things to do."

Compared to the US which exports wars and chaos, China is now more actively providing public goods to contribute to world peace and development, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiatives, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, and these initiatives are not just words, but come with effective actions, Zhu noted.

The school construction project that Mfatan is working on is an example, as it is launched by the Power Construction Corporation of China. Mfatan said "the Iraqi people have gone through many wars. I hope these wars will not return. I wish security and stability for the Iraqi people, and since I work with Chinese companies, I would like to thank the staff and the Chinese people for their support for Iraq in construction and reconstruction."



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